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ABSTRACT

Recognizing the lack of public confidence in the schools, public officials and educators should discuss the proper use and limitations of competency testing and the implementation of national tests. Competency tests should be used for diagnosis, for certifying that students possess basic skills, and for public awareness. They should not be the sole criterion for assessing competency; furthermore, there are aspects of learning beyond academic achievement which tests do not measure, such as maturity, self-discipline, honesty and judgment. National tests are strongly discouraged for these reasons: they lack local commitment; no test is right for every school; there is no one definition for minimal competency; and they would discourage local experimentation. While each state and school district should develop a competency program, the federal government should and will take a limited role by supporting the following ventures: (1) The National Academy of Sciences will conduct a major test evaluation and usage study; (2) The Education Commission of the States and similar organizations will run workshops and provide technical assistance; (3) The National Academy of Education will establish an advisory Committee on Testing and Basic Skills; (4) The Office of Education's Project on Fundamental Skills will coordinate 13 different federal programs dealing with basic skills; (5) The National Institute of Education will study student failure; (6) Educational television and video-disk Programs will be developed; (7) The critical role of parents in educating their children will be strengthened. Finally, public officials and educators should strengthen their commitment to fairness in admitting minorities to professional schools. (CP)

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HEW NEWS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

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REMARKS OF

JOSEPH A. CALIFANO, JR.

SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

BEFORE THE

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD ANNUAL MEETING

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1977

THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO JOIN YOU ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COLLEGE BOARD.

IT'S A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE; TO ADDRESS AN ORGANIZATION WITH AN ABIDING COMMITMENT TO THE THEME OF THIS FORUM -- "EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN THE SEARCH FOR STANDARDS."

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IN KEEPING WITH THAT THEME, I WANT TO DISCUSS TWO SUBJECTS WITH WHICH ALL OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR AND TO WHICH THOSE OF US IN GOVERNMENT MUST GIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT.

THEY ARE EDUCATIONAL TESTING AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY IN AMERICA. I WANT TO ASK -- AND SUGGEST SOME ANSWERS -- TO THESE QUESTIONS:

-- FIRST, WHAT ARE THE PROPER USES OF TESTS AS WE SEEK TO TRAIN STUDENTS IN CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS THAT EVERY CITIZEN IN A DEMOCRACY SHOULD POSSESS?

-- SECOND, SHOULD WE HAVE NATIONAL TESTS AND STANDARDS?

THESE QUESTIONS ARISE, AMID THE GROWING CONCERN OF OUR PEOPLE THAT EDUCATIONAL QUALITY IN AMERICA, DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, IS GOING, NOT UP, BUT DOWN, AND SHARPLY DOWN.

-- EACH YEAR FROM 1963 TO 1976, SCORES ON THE VERBAL AND MATHEMATICS SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TESTS WENT DOWN. DURING THOSE THIRTEEN YEARS, THE OVERALL DECLINE WAS NEARLY 50 POINTS ON THE VERBAL TEST MORE THAN 30 POINTS ON MATHEMATICS.

-- A SURVEY OF THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS SHOWED THAT IN 1975, MORE THAN TWELVE OUT OF EVERY 100 17-YEAR OLD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE; AND THAT ONLY TEN OF EVERY HUNDRED COULD CALCULATE A SIMPLE TAXI FARE.

-- ONLY 34 PERCENT OF 17-YEAR OLDS COULD DETERMINE THE MOST ECONOMICAL SIZE OF A PRODUCT.

-- ONLY 53 PERCENT KNEW THAT EACH STATE HAD TWO SENATORS.

-- ONLY 53 PERCENT WERE AWARE THAT THE PRESIDENT DOES NOT APPOINT MEMBERS OF CONGRESS.

THESE STATISTICS OF DECLINING COMPETENCE ARE DAILY AND SADLY CONFIRMED BY STORIES WE READ IN THE NEWS:

-- LAST YEAR IN WASHINGTON, D.C., A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE WAS REJECTED BY A LOCAL UNIVERSITY; HIS SCORES ON REPEATED TESTS FELL FAR BELOW THE MINIMUM RANGE FOR ACCEPTABLE APPLICANTS. THE STORY MADE HEADLINES -- BECAUSE THE YOUNG MAN WAS THE VALEDICTORIAN OF HIS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS.

-- HERE IN SAN FRANCISCO, A YOUNG MAN SUED SCHOOL OFFICIALS -- BECAUSE UPON GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1972, HE DISCOVERED THAT HIS READING SKILLS WERE THOSE OF A FIFTH GRADER.

AMID REPORTS OF FALLING TEST SCORES AND SEMI-LITERATE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, IT IS NO WONDER THAT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS MORE OFTEN WANING THAN WAXING. IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS RATING THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS GOOD OR EXCELLENT HAS FALLEN ALMOST 25 PERCENT. AND THIS YEAR, 83 PERCENT OF PERSONS POLLED FAVORED A RETURN TO BASICS -- A RETURN TO THE THREE RS, TAUGHT IN MORE ORDERLY CLASSROOMS.

THERE IS AN INSISTENT MESSAGE FOR ALL OF US IN THIS INTENSE CONCERN ABOUT AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE AMERICAN PEOPLE -- IN RETURN FOR THE BILLIONS OF TAX DOLLARS THEY SPEND ON EDUCATION; IN RETURN FOR THE GREAT HOPE THEY INVEST IN THEIR CHILDREN'S FUTURE -- ARE DEMANDING THAT A BASIC LEVEL OF COMPETENCE, A SET OF MINIMUM SKILLS, BE TRANSMITTED BY OUR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS TO THEIR STUDENTS.

AS YOU KNOW, MANY REASONS HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED FOR THE DECLINE IN TEST SCORES: THE CHANGING COMPOSITION OF TEST-TAKING STUDENTS; INSUFFICIENT CLASSROOM TIME ON THE THREE RS; THE EROSION OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS; INSTABILITY IN FAMILY STRUCTURE; THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION.

THE EXPLANATIONS OF DECLINING SCORES MAY BE ARGUABLE, BUT THE RESULT IS NOT:

GROWING CONCERN ABOUT EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND BASIC SKILLS HAS SET OFF AN EXPLOSION OF INTEREST IN TESTING.

ALL OVER THE NATION, PARENTS, LEGISLATORS AND EDUCATORS ARE DEMANDING MORE TESTING AS A WAY TO ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOLS ARE TEACHING AND THE STUDENTS ARE LEARNING. AT LAST COUNT, 26 STATES HAD ADOPTED SOME FORM OF COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM; EVERY OTHER STATE BUT ONE WAS CONTEMPLATING SOME KIND OF PROGRAM FOR TESTING BASIC SKILLS.

IN THE FACE OF THIS PASSIONATE CONCERN, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE, AS PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EDUCATORS, EXCHANGE OUR VIEWS ON THE PROPER USE OF TESTS -- AND THEIR LIMITATIONS. AND IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT THAT ALL OF US COMMUNICATE THOSE VIEWS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE -- WHO ARE VITALLY INTERESTED IN BASIC EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCE.

TO BEGIN WITH, I SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT THE TESTS I AM DISCUSSING THIS MORNING -- BASIC COMPETENCY TESTS -- ARE MEASURES OF BASIC SKILLS LIKE READING, WRITING OR ARITHMETIC: ESTIMATES, AT A GIVEN MOMENT, OF ACHIEVEMENT, OF LEARNING. THEY DO <u>NOT</u> ATTEMPT TO MEASURE I.Q., INTELLIGENCE, OR NATIVE ABILITY. USED PROPERLY, BASIC COMPETENCY TESTS ARE DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS -- NOT DEVICES FOR LABELING OR STIGMATIZING STUDENTS.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. THE PROCESS OF EDUCATING SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS -- OF TRAINING THE PARENTS, THE VOTERS, THE PROFESSIONALS OF TOMORROW -- IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE SET LOOSE ON UNCHARTED SEAS, WITH NO COMPASS TO DISCOVER WHETHER THAT PROCESS IS GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I SHARE A VIEW WHICH MOST OF YOU HOLD: TESTING IS NOT THE ONLY WAY, BUT IT IS AN IMPORTANT WAY, OF GETTING INFORMATION TO POINT -- AND KEEP -- US ON THE RIGHT COURSE.

LET ME INDICATE WHAT I BELIEVE TO BE SOME VALID USES OF TESTING.

THE FIRST USE OF TESTS IS TO DIAGNOSE INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PROBLEMS. A SINGLE TEST CAN HARDLY GIVE A COMPLETE PICTURE OF HOW MUCH A STUDENT HAS LEARNED, BUT IT IS ONE INDICATOR, TO BE COMBINED WITH OTHERS SUCH AS CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE, THAT CAN HELP US EVALUATE A CHILD'S PROGRESS. THE PURPOSE IS NOT TO ATTACH A LABEL, BUT TO IDENTIFY STUDENTS TO WHOM TEACHERS -- AND PARENTS -- SHOULD GIVE SPECIAL ATTENTION, AND THEN ENSURE THAT ACHIEVEMENT IS BROUGHT UP TO PAR. TESTS ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING; THE KEY IS TO HAVE CAREFULLY CRAFTED REMEDIAL PROGRAMS READY TO FOLLOW. AND THE EARLIER IN SCHOOLING THAT THE PROCESS OF TESTING, DIAGNOSIS, AND REMEDY STARTS, THE MORE EFFECTIVE IT WILL PROVE.

A SECOND USE OF TESTS IS TO CERTIFY THAT STUDENTS AT A PARTICULAR LEVEL -- AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES -- POSSESS CERTAIN BASIC ABILITIES. FEWER THAN HALF THE 18 YEAR OLDS IN THIS COUNTRY GO ON TO COLLEGE. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR SOCIETY TO KNOW THAT OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS ARE EQUIPPED WITH CERTAIN BASIC SKILLS. AND IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THESE TEENAGERS TO HAVE A RELIABLE JOB CREDENTIAL. IF A DIPLOMA DOES NOT SIGNIFY ANY GENUINE ACHIEVEMENT, GRADUATES MAY BE LOCKED OUT OF JOBS. UNEMPLOYMENT OF OUR YOUTH REMAINS OVER 15%; THE RATE FOR CERTAIN GROUPS -- BLACK YOUTH IN OUR CENTRAL CITIES, FOR EXAMPLE -- IS A STAGGERING 38%. THESE TEENAGERS NEED THE CHANCE TO EARN A DIPLOMA THAT WILL BE REGARDED AS EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT, NOT A WORTHLESS TICKET TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE CITY STREETS.

THE THIRD PURPOSE OF TESTING IS THE ONE THAT HAS GENERATED THE GREATEST INTEREST AND CONTROVERSY: THE IDEA THAT BASIC SKILLS TESTING WILL MAKE OUR SCHOOLS MORE RESPONSIVE TO PARENTS AND TAXPAYERS WHO ARE VITALLY CONCERNED WITH EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. OUR SCHOOLS MUST BE RESPONSIVE TO THE PUBLIC; THE MISSION OF EDUCATION, LIKE THE MISSION OF GOVERNMENT, IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE IMMUNE FROM OUTSIDE SCRUTINY. USED PROPERLY, STANDARDIZED TESTS CAN PROVIDE A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE; THEY PROVIDE ONE IMPORTANT PERSPECTIVE FOR EVALUATING HOW WELL STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS ARE DOING.

THE MERE FACT THAT A SCHOOL'S TEST SCORES SEEM LOW, HOWEVER, DOES NOT MEAN SCHOOL OFFICIALS ARE DOING A BAD JOB. THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY SOME TEACHERS AND SCHOOL OFFICIALS THAT THEY WILL AUTOMATICALLY -- AND UNFAIRLY -- BE BLAMED FOR LOW TEST SCORES IS A LEGITIMATE ONE. IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT TEST SCORES IN A DISTRICT THAT IS LONG ON SOCIAL ILLS AND SHORT ON MONEY TO MATCH THOSE FROM THE BEST AND MOST AFFLUENT SUBURBAN SCHOOLS. AND TESTS ARE BUT ONE WAY OF ASSESSING PERFORMANCE.

BUT IT IS FAIR TO ASK SCHOOL OFFICIALS WHAT RESPONSES TO THE TEST SCORES SEEM APPROPRIATE. FOR AS ALL OF YOU ARE WELL AWARE, TESTS ARE ONLY ONE STEP IN MAKING SCHOOLS RESPONSIVE AND, ULTIMATELY, MAKING THEM BETTER. THEY MUST BE PART OF AN EFFORT SHARED BY TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND OFFICIALS -- TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOLS. TESTING DOES NOT EDUCATE CHILDREN; IT CAN ONLY HELP US TO PERFORM THAT TASK MORE EFFECTIVELY. EVEN THE BEST PROGRAMS OF BASIC SKILLS TESTING WILL BE WORTHLESS -- UNLESS WE CONNECT THEM WITH PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO REMEDY THE SHORTCOMINGS AND CAPITALIZE ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS TESTS UNCOVER.

TESTING FOR BASIC COMPETENCY CAN SERVE IMPORTANT PURPOSES IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. BUT BASIC COMPETENCY TESTING WILL BE ACCEPTABLE AND EFFECTIVE ONLY IF WE STRESS, ALONG WITH ITS BENEFITS, THE CRITICAL LIMITATIONS AND DANGERS OF TESTING.

FIRST, LIKE OTHER METHODS OF ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT, TESTS ARE FAR FROM PERFECT. THE BEGUILING PRECISION OF TEST SCORES DISGUISES MANY DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT TESTS MEASURE AND HOW WELL THEY SUCCEED. TESTS ARE TOOLS -- NOT MAGIC WANDS. EVEN WITH THE MOST SOPHISTICATED TESTS, THE ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING WILL STILL REQUIRE SENSITIVE JUDGMENTS ABOUT A CHILD'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT; TESTS CAN HELP INFORM SUCH JUDGMENTS; TESTS CANNOT MAKE THEM.

SECOND, THERE IS THE ISSUE OF CULTURAL BIAS. TESTS CAN PROVE ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF CHILDREN. A QUESTION ABOUT THE STOCK MARKET RELATES MORE CLOSELY TO THE LIFE EXPERIENCES OF ONE CULTURAL GROUP THAN ANOTHER. CLEARLY STUDENTS WHOSE NATIVE TONGUE IS NOT ENGLISH WILL FIND STANDARDIZED TESTS MORE DIFFICULT. SCHOOL CHILDREN FROM POOR OR BROKEN FAMILIES MAY HAVE FACED OBSTACLES MAKING SUCCESS IN SCHOOL FAR MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTAIN.

BUT THESE ARE REASONS FOR IMPROVING TESTS -- NOT DISCARDING THEM. WE MUST CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO DEVELOP TESTS WHOSE CONTENT DOES NOT PLACE AN EXCESSIVE PREMIUM ON CULTURAL BACKGROUND. EVEN THESE WILL PROVE HARDER TO CHILDREN FROM DEPRIVED BACKGROUNDS OR WITH LESS FACILITY IN ENGLISH, BUT THIS DOES NOT MAKE THE TESTS UNFAIR.

FOR THERE ARE SOME SUBJECTS -- I WOULD INCLUDE THE THREE RS AMONG THEM -- THAT EVERY CHILD MUST KNOW TO SHARE FULLY IN THE OPPORTUNITIES OF AMERICAN LIFE. A LOW TEST SCORE DOES NOT MEAN A STUDENT IS INFERIOR OR UNEDUCABLE; IT MEANS ONLY THAT TO DATE HIS PROGRESS IN THE SUBJECTS TESTED SHOWS CONSIDERABLE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT. WE MUST IDENTIFY CHILDREN WHO LACK THESE BASIC SKILLS, SO THAT WE CAN HELP THEM. NOT TO DO SO WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE INJUSTICE.

THE THIRD BASIC LIMITATION ON THE USE OF TESTS IS THAT THEY MEASURE PROGRESS TOWARD BUT A FEW OF THE MYRIAD GOALS WE ASK OU SCHOOLS TO PURSUE. NOT ALL SKILLS ARE BASIC SKILLS; IN FOCUSING ON MINIMAL COMPETENCY, WE CANNOT LET THE MINIMUM BECOME THE MAXIMUM. WE MUST ENSURE THAT STUDENTS OF ABILITY ARE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DEVELOP TO THE FULLEST, AND THAT IMPORTANT SUBJECTS BEYOND THE THREE RS ARE NOT OVERLOOKED.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS BUT ONE OBJECTIVE OF OUR SCHOOLS. FEW OF US WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO HAD MASTERED ENGLISH LITERATURE AND TRIGONOMETRY -- BUT WHO LACKED MATURITY, SELF-DISCIPLINE, HONESTY, AND JUDGMENT. STANDARDIZED TESTS CAN HELP US MEASURE WHETHER STUDENTS ARE LEARNING CERTAIN SKILLS; THEY CANNOT TELL US HOW WELL SCHOOLS ARE PERFORMING OTHER LARGE AND IMPORTANT PARTS OF THEIR JOBS.

THIS LAST LIMITATION IS A CLEAR WARNING WHICH ALL OF US MUST SOUND TO THE PUBLIC AGAINST PREOCCUPATION WITH TESTING. THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOLS IS NOT MERELY TO PRODUCE HIGH SCORES ON ACHIEVEMENT TESTS; IT IS TO EDUCATE CHILDREN, TO HELP TEACH THEM TO APPRECIATE WHAT IS WORTHWHILE, TO GIVE THEM THE ABILITY TO EXTRACT MEANING FROM FUTURE EXPERIENCES.

TO TEACH TO THE TESTS: TO FOCUS OBSESSIVELY ON TEST SCORES, WOULD BE STULTIFYING -- AND UNLIKELY IN THE END, TO IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. OUR GREAT AND URGENT NEED GOES FAR BEYOND TESTS AND TESTING PROGRAMS -- IT IS TO IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY THE WHOLE PROCESS OF EDUCATION. IF WE DO THAT, TEST SCORES WILL REFLECT THAT IMPROVEMENT.

IN SHORT, BASIC COMPETENCY TESTS, USED SKILLFULLY AND SENSITIVELY, ARE USEFUL AND NECESSARY -- THEY ARE A LIMITED, BUT VERY IMPORTANT TOOL FOR CHARTING AND IMPROVING THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION. WE NEED TO DO MORE TESTING AND WE NEED TO DO BETTER TESTING.

HAVING SAID ALL THIS, AM I ADVOCATING, ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT I HEAD AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, A PROGRAM OF NATIONAL TESTS, OR NATIONAL STANDARDS OF SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT?

ABSOLUTELY NOT.

I BELIEVE THAT PROPOSALS FOR FEDERAL TESTING PROGRAMS, HOWEVER WELL-INTENTIONED, ARE MISGUIDED; THAT EVEN A WHOLLY VOLUNTARY NATIONAL TEST OR SET OF STANDARDS WOULD BE A STEP IN PRECISELY THE WRONG DIRECTION.

THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS I OPPOSE SO STRONGLY THE IDEA OF TESTS AND STANDARDS IMPOSED FROM WASHINGTON:

-- IF A TEST IS GIVEN LARGELY BECAUSE SOMEONE IN WASHINGTON SEEMS TO THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA, LOCAL COMMITMENT MAY BE WANTING. THE TESTS MAY END UP AS LITTLE MORE THAN A DISTRACTING WASTE OF TIME AND MONEY, RATHER THAN PART OF AN ENTHUSIASTIC EFFORT TO SPUR INDIVIDUAL EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT.

-- THERE IS NO SINGLE TEST THAT IS RIGHT FOR EVERY SCHOOL. BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT TEST COVERAGE ARISE EVEN IN TESTING THE THREE RS: SHOULD MATHEMATICAL REASONING OR COMPUTATION BE STRESSED? SHOULD A READING TEST MEASURE UNDERSTANDING OF A NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH OR AN ADVERTISEMENT? SHOULD THE EXAMPLES USED TO TEST COMPETENCY IN ARITHMETIC BE DIFFERENT FOR FARM CHILDREN THAN FOR THOSE WHOSE EXPERIENCE IS LIMITED TO URBAN STREETS? WHAT KIND OF TEST BEST MEASURES EARLY BASIC COMPETENCY IN A BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL SITUATION?

-- THERE ARE MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE QUALITY, VALIDITY, AND CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT TESTS THEMSELVES. TESTS WHOSE MAIN PURPOSE IS INDIVIDUAL DIAGNOSIS MAY BE WRONG FOR EVALUATING CURRICULUM. STATES AND LOCALITIES HAVE ENCOUNTERED SURPRISING DIVISION IN DECIDING HOW TO DESIGN A BASIC COMPETENCY TEST. IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, EDUCATORS AND RESEARCHERS WILL BE ABLE TO TEST THESE TESTS AND DETERMINE WHETHER SOME ARE SIMPLY BETTER THAN OTHERS -- AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES. THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO NATIONAL ANSWERS -- CERTAINLY NOT AT THIS TIME.

-- MOST IMPORTANTLY, IN THIS COUNTRY CONTROL OF CURRICULUM HAS ALWAYS RESTED WITH STATES AND LOCALITIES, NOT WITH WASHINGTON. ANY SET OF TEST QUESTIONS THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRESCRIBED SHOULD SURELY BE SUSPECT AS A FIRST STEP TOWARD A NATIONAL CURRICULUM. THAT WOULD NOT MERELY RUN COUNTER TO STRONGLY HELD VIEWS ABOUT LOCAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION; IT WOULD STIFLE LOCAL EXPERIMENTS WITH A VARIETY OF APPROACHES TO LEARNING.

IN ITS MOST EXTREME FORM, NATIONAL CONTROL OF CURRICULUM IS A FORM OF NATIONAL CONTROL OF IDEAS. WE SHOULD BE VERY WARY OF TREADING IN THAT DIRECTION; THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION HAS BEEN TO ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY -- NOT RIGID UNIFORMITY.

IT IS ONE OF THE CHIEF VIRTUES OF OUR FEDERAL SYSTEM THAT WE HAVE FIFTY POTENTIAL LABORATORIES FOR INNOVATION IN EDUCATION; FIFTY DIFFERENT CENTERS FOR DEVELOPING IDEAS AND PROGRAMS. I BELIEVE THAT EVERY STATE SHOULD HAVE A PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPING AND MEASURING BASIC SKILLS THAT INCLUDES COMPETENCY TESTING; BUT I THINK EACH OF THE FIFTY STATES -- AND EACH OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS WITHIN THOSE STATES -- SHOULD DECIDE HOW IT CAN MAKE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF COMPETENCY TESTING IN ITS PROGRAM. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT, BUT NOT DIRECT, THEIR EFFORTS.

ALTHOUGH I OPPOSE ANY PROGRAM OF NATIONAL TESTING, THERE IS AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. THIS ADMINISTRATION CAN AND SHOULD TAKE SOME MAJOR STEPS TO HELP THE STATES AND LOCALITIES, AND I HAVE SEVERAL TO ANNOUNCE TODAY:

-- FIRST, EDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT DIFFERENT TESTS MEASURE; HOW THEY COMPARE; WHAT THEIR STRENGTHS AND LIMIATIONS ARE. WE WILL JOIN IN SUPPORTING A MAJOR NEW STUDY OF TESTS BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES. WE WILL EXPAND EXISTING RESEARCH EFFORTS TO EVALUATE NOT ONLY THE TECHNICAL PROPERTIES OF TESTS, BUT ALSO THE WAYS THEY ARE BEING USED IN PRACTICE BY DIFFERENT SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

-- SECOND, THE INFORMATION WE DEVELOP MUST BE COMMUNICATED SPEEDILY TO EDUCATORS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS IN THE STATES. WE WILL THEREFORE PROVIDE BROAD SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES, WHICH RUNS WORKSHOPS AND PROVIDES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO STATES AND LOCALITIES. WE WILL ENSURE THAT TRAINING AND INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP STATE AND LOCAL DECISIONMAKERS TO ANSWER A BAFFLING ARRAY OF TECHNICAL AND POLICY QUESTIONS ABOUT BASIC COMPETENCY TESTING.

-- THIRD, AS WE GAIN EXPERIENCE WITH BASIC COMPETENCY TESTING, WE MUST EVALUATE THE RESULTS FROM THE BROADEST POSSIBLE PERSPECTIVE. THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF EDUCATION, WHICH CAN PROVIDE JUST THAT PERSPECTIVE, HAS ACCEPTED OUR INVITATION TO ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE ON TESTING AND BASIC SKILLS, WHICH WILL ADVISE US ABOUT THESE QUESTIONS ON A CONTINUING BASIS.

-- FOURTH, AS PART OF A NEW EMPHASIS ON BASIC SKILLS, WE ARE ESTABLISHING IN HEW'S OFFICE OF EDUCATION A PROJECT ON FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS. THIS WILL BE THE FIRST TIME THAT 13 DIFFERENT FEDERAL PROGRAMS DEALING WITH BASIC SKILLS -- PROGRAMS WHICH TOGETHER SPEND THREE AND ONE-HALF BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY -- HAVE BEEN LINKED TOGETHER. THIS INNOVATION WILL SHARPEN GOALS, STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS, AND ENSURE BETTER TARGETING OF FUNDS BY HEW AS WE WORK TO HELP STATES AND LOCALITIES DEVELOP EFFECTIVE PLANS FOR IMPROVING BASIC SKILLS.

-- FIFTH, I HAVE ASKED THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION TO LAUNCH A MAJOR STUDY OF THE REASONS WHY STUDENTS FAIL TO PERFORM WELL ON TESTS AND BASIC SKILLS. WE NEED TO KNOW WHO IS NOT PERFORMING WELL, WHY THEY ARE NOT PERFORMING WELL, HOW THIS FAILURE AFFECTS STUDENTS' LIVES, AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO IMPROVE THEIR BASIC SKILLS. THE KNOWLEDGE WE GAIN WILL PERMIT STATES AND LOCALITIES TO DESIGN EFFECTIVE REMEDIAL PROGRAMS AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR TESTING EFFORT.

-- SIXTH, WE WILL SUPPORT DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AIMED AT DEVELOPING A LIBRARY OF EDUCATIONAL TV AND VIDEO-DISK PROGRAMS THAT COULD TRANSFORM THESE MODERN TECHNOLOGIES INTO IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES. OUR BEST ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT BY THE TIME STUDENTS ENTER FIRST GRADE THEY HAVE WATCHED 3,000 TO 4,000 HOURS OF TELEVISION; WHEN THEY LEAVE HIGH SCHOOL, THEY HAVE SPENT MORE TIME IN FRONT OF A TELEVISION SET THAN IN THE CLASSROOM. TELEVISION IS OFTEN BLAMED FOR EDUCATIONAL SHORTCOMINGS. WE INTEND TO EVALUATE AND DEVELOP ITS EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL, AND TO BUILD EFFECTIVE BRIDGES BETWEEN THESE NEW LEARNING RESOURCES AND THE CLASSROOM TEACHER.

-- SEVENTH, WE WILL SEEK TO STRENGTHEN THE CRITICAL ROLE OF PARENTS IN EDUCATING THEIR CHILDREN. IT IS EASY FOR PARENTS TO CRITICIZE TEACHERS. BUT WHEN ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS ARE BELOW PAR, PARENTS MUST HOLD THEMSELVES EQUALLY ACCOUNTABLE AND EXAMINE WHAT THEY CAN DO TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN. WE WILL SUPPORT MODEL PARENT-TEACHER PROJECTS AND PARENT ADVISORY BODIES TO FIND NEW WAYS TO KEEP PARENTS INFORMED ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S PROGRESS, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEST SCORES, AND WHAT THEY CAN DO TO ASSIST TEACHERS. WE WILL ALSO SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS THAT PARENTS CAN USE WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN THE HOME, ESPECIALLY DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS TO COUNTERACT THE FALLOFF IN ACHIEVEMENT THAT SEEMS TO OCCUR DURING THE SUMMER VACATION.

IN ALL THESE EFFORTS, LET ME EMPHASIZE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL PLAY A LIMITED, SUPPORTING ROLE. WE WANT TO SUPPLEMENT AND STRENGTHEN THE EFFORTS OF THE STATES AND LOCAL SCHOOLS -- NOT TO SUPPLANT THEM. THE VITAL ENERGY, THE COMMITMENT TO DESIGN EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS AND TO SEE THAT THEY WORK, MUST PERCOLATE UP FROM THE LOCAL SCHOOLS -- NOT TRICKLE DOWN FROM WASHINGTON.

NOW, HAVING SPOKEN ABOUT TESTING AS A TOOL FOR ENSURING EXCELLENCE, I WANT TO TOUCH BRIEFLY ON THE OTHER COMMITMENT YOU AND I SHARE: A COMMITMENT TO FAIRNESS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMISSIONS.

THE STRIKING LACK OF MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN OUR MEDICAL, LAW, GRADUATE AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS HAS BEEN AMPLY DOCUMENTED. FIVE FACTS ILLUSTRATE THE PROBLEM:

-- IN 1950, 10 PERCENT OF OUR TOTAL POPULATION WAS BLACK, YET ONLY 2.2% OF ALL PHYSICIANS WERE BLACK. BY 1970, 11.1 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION WAS BLACK, YET THE PERCENTAGE OF BLACK PHYSICIANS REMAINED UNCHANGED.

-- THE NUMBER OF BLACK LAWYERS IN THIS NATION HOVERS JUST ABOVE 2 PERCENT OF THE PROFESSION -- A PERCENTAGE WHICH HAS NOT CHANGED MARKEDLY IN TWENTY YEARS.

-- LESS THAN 5 PERCENT OF ALL DOCTORAL DEGREES AWARDED BETWEEN 1973 AND 1976 WENT TO MINORITY CANDIDATES.

-- IF ALL THE BLACK PH.D'S EVER EDUCATED IN THIS COUNTRY WERE PLACED ON OUR UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES, THERE WOULD BE LESS THAN THREE PER CAMPUS.

-- THE NUMBER OF WOMEN FACULTY MEMBERS DECLINED FROM 1974-5 TO 1975-6.

OBVIOUSLY, WITHOUT SPECIAL EFFORTS TO RECRUIT AND INCLUDE MORE MINORITY STUDENTS, THIS GLARING UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN THE PROFESSIONS AND THE DOCTORAL RANKS WILL ONLY CONTINUE.

AS WE GO FORWARD IN OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS HAS NEVER BEEN A TOTALLY OBJECTIVE ONE. IT HAS, WITH GOOD REASON, BEEN LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING. THROUGH THE YEARS, GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS -- AND COLLEGES TO AN EVEN GREATER DEGREE -- HAVE LOOKED TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS BEYOND MERE TEST SCORES AND GRADES IN DETERMINING FITNESS FOR ADMISSION, FOR

EXAMPLE: GEOGRAPHICAL MIX; MOTIVATION; PERSONAL INTERESTS; SPECIALIZED INTERESTS; EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND WORK EXPERIENCE; WHETHER A PARENT WAS AN ALUMNUS OR ALUMNA; WHETHER THE PARENT OR APPLICANT HAS BEEN, OR WILL BE, A SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTOR. THE SEARCH FOR DIVERSITY IS NOTHING NEW.

ON THIS POINT, I WOULD EMPHASIZE THAT WE MUST CONTINUALLY SEEK NEW WAYS OF MEASURING TRUE HUMAN POTENTIAL: WAYS THAT REACH BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL YARDSTICKS. THIS IS A TASK THAT YOU ESPECIALLY CAN LEAD. WE MUST DISCOVER HOW TO DISCOUNT THE EFFECTS OF EARLY DISADVANTAGE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC COMPETENCE. WE MUST BROADEN THE RANGE OF TALENTS MEASURED IN ADMISSIONS TESTS. WE MUST FIND WAYS TO DISCOVER VITAL PERSONAL QUALITIES -- MOTIVATION, INTEGRITY, IDEALISM -- THAT BEAR UPON APTITUDE AND ACHIEVEMENT.

THIS QUEST IS COMPELLED, I BELIEVE, BY THE HUMANE PURPOSE OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS WHICH SEEK, NOT TO EXCLUDE, BUT TO INCLUDE; NOT TO SET RIGID AND ARBITRARY QUOTAS BUT TO ESTABLISH FLEXIBLE AND REASONABLE NUMERICAL GOALS THAT OPERATE AS NEITHER A FLOOR NOR A CEILING; NOT TO FORCE THE UNQUALIFIED UPON UNWILLING FACULTIES, BUT TO BRING IN MINORITY APPLICANTS WHO ARE FULLY QUALIFIED TO PASS THE COURSE OF STUDY AND BECOME RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONALS.

GREAT RESERVES OF HUMAN TALENT HAVE BEEN LOCKED UP BY OUR NATIONAL LEGACY OF SLAVERY AND DISCRIMINATION. OUR MISSION IS TO ENSURE THAT THIS POTENTIAL CAN BE RELEASED -- YOUR MISSION, AS LEADERS IN EDUCATIONAL ADMISSIONS, IS TO ENSURE THAT THIS POTENTIAL WILL BE RECOGNIZED.

LAST WEEK, A NOBEL PRIZE WAS AWARDED TO AN AMERICAN WOMAN, THE MEDICAL PHYSICIST DR. ROSALYN YALOW. IN SPEAKING OF HER CAREER, DR. YALOW RECALLED THAT WHEN SHE FINISHED COLLEGE, SHE WAS TOLD THAT A WOMAN COULD NEVER GET INTO GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PHYSICS. SO FOR A TIME, UNTIL SHE FINALLY WON AN ASSISTANTSHIP AT A UNIVERSITY IN THE MIDWEST -- SHE WENT TO WORK AS A TYPIST. SHE WAS A VERY GOOD TYPIST -- BUT AN EVEN BETTER PHYSICIST.

OUR GOAL, YOURS AND MINE, IS A NATION IN WHICH NO PERSON WHO HAS GREAT DREAMS AND NATIVE ABILITY WILL BE BARRED FROM THE TRAINING HE NEEDS, OR SHE NEEDS, TO FULFILL THOSE DREAMS AND PERFECT THAT ABILITY. OUR GOAL IS A NATION IN WHICH THE TWIN IDEALS OF EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY ARE NOT MERE DREAMS, BUT ACTUALITIES.

I BELIEVE THAT, WITH EARNEST EFFORT, WE CAN ACHIEVE THAT GOAL -- AND FOR ALL THAT YOU ARE DOING TO BRING THAT ACHIEVEMENT NEARER, YOUR NATION IS IN YOUR DEBT.

THANK YOU.

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